

BULLETIN BOARD

Our guest speaker at the July 8th SO.CA.TA meeting is Jeffrey Boberg of MTA, discussing customer surveying. Our thanks to Director Ken Ruben for arranging Mr. Boberg's appearance.

We will have our annual night owl service exploration on Friday, July 14th into Satur-

day, July 15th. The chief components will be riding MTA Line 622 (Green Line late-night emulator) and an early morning trip on the Orange Line. Details will be provided at our July 8th meeting.

Save the date: Monday, October 30th, for the annual Mobility 21 summit at Sheraton Universal City. 🚗

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Roger Christensen has an article titled "L.A. Rail Construction Restarts Both Eastward and Westward" in the April-May 2006 issue of California Rail News.

Chris Flescher attended the May 1 Transportation Agency of Monterey County Rail Policy meeting and a May 13 workshop about Bus Rapid Transit at Cal State Univ - Monterey Bay.

Kymerleigh Richards had a letter to the editor published in the May 14 *Daily News* responding to comments by Bus Riders Union organizer Manuel Criollo in the May 9 article

"MTA won't raise fares for one year". Richards noted despite Criollo's claim that MTA's budgetary condition was a "self-imposed budget crisis" in truth the chief cause was the heavy cost of complying with consent decree orders resulting from the BRU's constant complaints. She also had a letter in the June 29 *Daily News* refuting claims by Manuel Criollo in the June 24 article "Mayor heralds new Rapid line in Valley" that MTA "had no expansion plans for Rapid bus" before the BRU got involved with the program.

The June 25 *Salinas Californian* printed a letter from Chris Flescher about the benefits of zoning and land use planning. 🚗

MTA SECTOR REPORTS

WESTSIDE/CENTRAL — Ken Ruben, Joseph Dunn, Hank Fung, Lionel Jones, and Ken Ruben attended the June 14th Westside/Central meeting.

Under public comment, I brought up that the Flyaway Bus sign at Patsouras Plaza says to "Board buses at Cesar Chavez and Vignes", which should be covered up so that passengers would not be confused.

I also brought up about the westbound stop at Hollywood and Highland, where many times there is confusion as to where to board buses going west, i.e., 217-717 (now 780), 212-312, Dash, etc. when events

block that stop.

Lionel and I both commented on the Metro Connections Workshop report by Rod Goldman. I don't remember everything Lionel commented on. I did support his comments against the 4 being truncated at Westwood Blvd. and passengers being forced to transfer to Big Blue Bus #1 until such time as the Rapid 704 is established. I think Lionel also commented negatively on the 714, and the combined 717/780. Lionel also commented on the eventual proposal on Line 2 being cut back into Pacific Palisades; Lionel pointed out that there would not be any alternate service by anyone if the 2 is cut back. 🚗

A correction to last month's column: It was past member Jerry Pass not Kent Landfield who was also at the Trade Tech meeting on the Expo line I mentioned.

Following the 2003 strike the MTA Board promised new ways of doing things would be found to avoid a breakdown in contract talks and a repeat service disruption in 2006. For a long time it was unclear whether this was anything other than empty rhetoric. Then late last year word started to spread that instead of Brenda Diederichs (who presided over talks that resulted in strikes in 2000 and 2003) Assistant CEO John Catoe was going to be lead negotiator. The change seems to have had a positive effect given the recently announced agreements with all three MTA Unions. Thank goodness! I wasn't enthused at the prospect of once again enduring a prolonged period of walking to get around.

I was startled while reading a *Denver Post* 3 part series on toll roads to find Martin Wachs referred to as director of transportation, space and technology for the Rand Corp. Until recently Wachs was professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of California, Berkeley and director of its Institute of Transportation Studies. Plus, someone who was constantly quoted by the press. How did this change fly under my radar screen?

Pundit Thomas Friedman recently made a big noise on the Charlie Rose public TV talk program about the glories of hybrids. I just had to shake my head at his boosterism--as if the absence of a tailpipe in itself solves all the problems cars cause.

Kevin Roderick on his blog LA Observed quotes comments by Los Angeles airport

chief Lydia Kennard at the June 29 Current Affairs Forum that extending the Green Line to reach the LAX terminals would cost more than a half-billion dollars, and that if LAX had that kind of money for transportation projects, "there's a lot of other things we should do" instead. Many residents who live adjacent the airport have pushed for the Green Line extension to mitigate traffic generated by LAX. I'll be curious whether Ms. Kennard creates a backlash: http://www.laobserved.com/archive/2006/06/get_over_the_green_line_gap_at_lax.html

My sense that groups like ours will be key to passage of the Infrastructure bonds has been validated by the comments of Senator Don Perata quoted by Bill Bradley in his blog New West Notes "the bonds won't be successful if they are politician-driven. It must be evident that lives will be demonstrably improved". This is especially true as the bonds face a cluttered ballot in November, with 5 bonds, several tax measures, some contentious initiatives on social issues plus candidates for statewide office all vying for attention.

An additional burden to passing the transportation bond is the recent feeding frenzy by the MTA Board to start planning various pet projects that they hope to build with the bond proceeds. This was the danger inherent in the choice to emphasize local decision making instead of having the bonds cluttered with earmarks a la SAFETEA-LU. As I like to say, every solution creates a new problem to solve.

The new state budget by being very generous to transit and local streets and roads may solve one unanticipated problem: while soaring gas prices raises the cost of operat-

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ing service it also causes substantial growth in ridership which puts an additional hole in the budget by creating a need to operate more service. Talk about the danger of being too successful.

The blog LAist reports the Bus Riders Union has been making presentations at neighborhood council meetings and to other groups (including our own) seeking support for extending the consent decree. Additional demands they promote:

- * No fare increases or service cuts
- * 3,000 bus fleet by 2010
- * Prioritizing and securing funding for the Wilshire Bus-Only Lane from Downtown to Santa Monica (plus implementing 10 bus-only lanes by 2010)
- * Moratorium on rail and subway expansion until all consent decree obligations are met and a platform for a first class bus system is adopted.

Looks like they are sticking to their same

old soundbite talking points to the bitter end.

Member John Ulloth sent me a copy of the most clueless transportation article I have read in a long time: "Working on the Railroad" by Mark Baard in the May/June 2006 Plenty, an environmental magazine [<http://www.plentymag.com/>]. In just 4 pages it breathlessly touts SCAG-lev, monorail, personal rapid transit and BladeRunner. The latter is a double-decker bus that supposedly can switch from running on roads to rail with ease. All are unproven yet treated as if they could be the miracle cure to our transportation needs. Give me a break!

I'll conclude by noting the recent exit from the Los Angeles Dept. of Transportation of Assistant General Manager James M. Okazaki. While I didn't always agree with him, he was unflinching cordial when we ran into each other at various transportation events. I expect he'll turn up sooner or later working for some politician or sharing his expertise at a private consulting firm. 🚌

PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY MUSEUM *Dana Gabbard*

For some years we have had newsletter exchanges with a few organizations similar to our own. Among these is the venerable Pacific Railroad Society, whose monthly newsletter Wheel Clicks I find consistently informative and well-written. Among the regular features is the latest news about the Society's Museum, located in San Dimas. My only brief visit to this facility occurred in 1997 during the Siemens Regiosprinter DMU demonstration. So I was quite happy when the idea was broached that we undertake a visit to the Pacific Railroad Museum. Director Ken Ruben (a longtime PRS member)

coordinated, aided by Lionel Jones as trip planner.

Saturday June 17 around 8:28 a.m. I caught Foothill Transit route 480 at Wilshire and Witmer. It was F1150, a low floor Gillig (with excellent air conditioning). It initially had 2 passengers but as it made its way thru downtown L.A. started to fill up, with the heaviest loads at 1st St./Hill and the entrance to the busway. The driver had to spend an inordinate amount of time explaining the fare to boarding passengers, despite the Foothill busbook providing (in English and Spanish) fairly clear explanations of

fare zone policies. At the busway entrance off Alameda Kent Landfield, Ken Ruben, Craig Weingarten, Lionel Jones plus Margaret Hudson and her husband boarded. After a quick sprint along the busway we arrived at El Monte Bus Station at 9:05 a.m. Waiting for us there was Carlos Oscuna. And on the MTA rt.484 bus right behind us was Kymberleigh Richards.

As we waited for our connecting bus we stood around and chatted - Margaret was curious about the amenities of the facility so a few of us described the features (so-so bathrooms along with vending machines, a Foothill Transit store, Greyhound ticket office, etc.). Finally at 9:20 a.m. (nine minutes late) Foothill rt.492, an Orion hi floor, arrived and we boarded. A plate above the front window announced our driver was named Freddy L. Initially we were the only passengers but as we made our way through suburbia the bus gradually filled. Our route was at first a commercial corridor, lined with fast food outlets. Entering Irwindale we passed the Speedway and then made our way through an industrial park. The surroundings induced me to share with some of our members the strange saga of Irwindale and the Los Angeles Raiders, who in 1988 negotiated to have the team move to Irwindale with a new stadium to be built in an abandoned quarry. It all collapsed amidst recriminations over dubious small town incestuous politics. The only winner was Raiders owner Al Davis who was able to walk away from the deal while keeping the \$10 million nonrefundable deposit the city paid him upfront as a sign of good faith. I bet the local taxpayers were really thrilled at that turn of events. Meanwhile we continued along Arrow Highway within sight of the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area--a floor control basin with bike trails atop its towering

stone berm. Soon we were going through another industrial park while we had constant boarding/deboarding activity (Kent noted several were making use of the bike rack). The surroundings became once again suburban and we passed Gladstone High School (situated on a huge piece of land) in Covina. At Arrow and Azusa 9 passengers boarded. By this time we had passed three Wienerschnitzel along with Sushi Time restaurant and The Wheel, whose neon sign proclaimed it offered "dancing, cocktails".

At 10:10 a.m. (20 minutes late) we deboarded at Bonita and Cataract. Waiting for us there was Henryka Maslowski. A short half-block walk along Bonita brought us to the Museum where Curtis Hanson was waiting to join us. It is located in a former Santa Fe depot that was constructed in 1934 (after the original depot was destroyed by fire the previous year). The building consists of 4 rooms filled with displays of railroiana artifacts, etc.

There is no admission and a informational sheet for self-guided touring was handed out by one of the PRS volunteers who staff the Museum.

The first room upon entering is the Waiting Room, dominated by a large bench of the type passengers sat on while waiting for their train (this one actually came from the Fullerton depot). Wall mounted displays gave a history of the railroad line adjacent to the depot and the citrus industry it once served. A TV in one corner had running on it the PRS tape For the Love of Trains which documents the history of the group and contains much historic footage of trains in Southern California. Since it was first offered in 2000 over two thousand copies have been

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sold. On the wall behind the TV was a arrival/departure board listing actual arrivals and departures of service for the depot in 1952, including several long distance trains of the era. Gazing at this, one realizes depots like this were gateways to the wider world for the cities they served. No wonder cities often fiercely fought to make sure when new tracks were being laid in their area that they weren't bypassed. Having a train station in your community was the equivalent to landing a sports franchise for modern day cities (as per my previous comments on Irwindale and the Raiders).

The 2nd room is the Agent's Room, where tickets formerly were sold and train movements monitored. A morse code key with code sheet caught the attention of Kent. A cart holding surplus books for sale was in the middle of the room. Along the walls were exhibits including a mockup signal control lever, numerous historic tickets and displays of promotional and operational artifacts.

The next room was the Baggage Room where baggage was loaded onto carts to be taken out and placed on the baggage cars. A display case included a set of dining car china from the Baltimore & Ohio. A large display board is used for rotating displays of historic photos.

Up stairs is the back room, the Freight Room. This was elevated so freight could be offloaded directly from railroad cars and onto trucks for delivery. This holds the Society's archival collection, including extensive holdings of books, maps and plans, timetables, periodicals, corporate publications, videos, and the largest railroad photography collection in Southern California.

By now we had been greeted by Lindsay Smith and current PRS President Vic Carlucci. After spending some two hours exploring the Museum most of us made our way down the street to partake of a local cafe/coffee shop called Roady's. And soon a group of Museum volunteers came in to take a table adjacent to ours. After a leisurely meal we sauntered out to make our way to the nearby bus stop for our return trip, only to find our bus was running early and about to pass us before we had a chance to get to the stop. Craig rushed over and asked the driver to wait while those of us planning to return on the 492 could cross Bonita. The driver explained she had trouble keeping to the schedule on this route and was seeking to have a head start before falling behind in mid-route. After boarding we all let out a sigh of relief and enjoyed an uneventful trip back to El Monte, from which we dispersed to our various final destinations. Kymberleigh Richards later pointed out to me "had the Foothill driver going back had been on schedule instead of early, we would have missed the 484 and 490 buses we caught at El Monte. Is that a good reason, though, for any operator on any line at any agency, to operate hot?" I think it is at least an argument that Foothill might consider adjusting the schedule of the 492 to be more realistic.

Our thanks to the Pacific Railroad Society for being our gracious hosts for this outing. 🚌

